

Talking with some girlfriends after a trackday at Infineon, the question on the way back to the hotel was, "when would we all be getting together again?." The next Women's Only event everyone was talking about was something called Femmoto. Some of my new friends asked me if I was going. I didn't know if I was or if I should – what was Femmoto and why was it so important to be there?

I was only home from Bikeland's Laguna Seca MotoGP Rally a couple of days when I received an Email from Bonnie at www.femmoto.com inviting me to come to Femmoto. She also sent me more details as to what Femmoto was. Kawasaki was sponsoring a group of women riders and asked me if I wanted to go. After reading Bonnie's Email and now understanding what Femmoto offered it's attendees – I was really excited to be asked to go.



Last year was the fourth year of the Femmoto all women's motorcycle event held in Las Vegas, Nevada on October 1st. This year Femmoto 2006 takes place over two days, on October 7th and 8th it costs \$100 dollars per day. You also need to book a hotel for your stay there. The Sahara Hotel and Casino was offering discounted room rates during the event. I talked to some women from out of town that got together and rented a house, they were really happy with that arrangement.

All you need to pack to participate in this event is your riding gear, your party clothes (you are going to Vegas) and your swimsuit. The nicest thing about the Sahara is the pool and the fact that this is where Femmoto holds their banquet and fashion show. The bikes are supplied. There are also classes and instruction offered for those in the Novice Group who want to 'slow down and learn something' as Orient Express' AMA racer Trey Yonce suggested to me when I was at VIR.



I flew into Vegas Friday night. For Femmoto attendees Friday is the day that you get to go to the track and look at all the bikes that are there and sign up for the ones you want to ride. Last year the bikes for Femmoto were provided by Kawasaki, Kymco, Buell and Aprilia. These manufactures brought a large selection of different types of bikes to pick from and gave the women attending Femmoto a lot of choice in riding styles. Women were encouraged to sign up for a different bike each session, so that they could try out different models back to back.



This year you get to pick if you want to ride on the track or take a dirt school. I took Kawasaki's dirtbike "School of Champions" last year and spent the day with Mercedes Gonzales. Mercedes is an amazing teacher and really stresses the importance of the

fundamentals. She has broken down riding in the dirt into simple choreography (well at least it looks simple when she does it!). Although Mercedes is scheduled to teach at this year's Femmoto dirt school, I don't know if she will be there since she was injured at the MiniMoto finals in Vegas in the spring. If you want to do the Kawasaki School of Champions at Femmoto you need to bring your own dirt bike since this is the advanced rider's course. If you are interested in the basic dirt course at Femmoto, (part of the \$100 admission for the day) Kawasaki is providing the bikes – so just bring your gear!



Saturday morning the energy at the Vegas track was electric. Everywhere I looked there were smiles on the women's faces. Monty (Bonnie's husband & partner) started the morning off by giving us the safety talk and introducing us to the sponsors of this event. Last year was the first year for Buell and they were very excited that they had been invited to participate. Kymco was here for the first time as well. Kawasaki was an original participant in Femmoto and Aprilia had been at Femmoto 4 years. It seems as though every year the event has gotten bigger and bigger, which gives the women coming to Femmoto more choices when it comes to picking which bikes they would like to ride on the track.

Last year I was part of Team Green, riding my dream bike, the 2005 ZX-6R. It's such a fun track bike! I took Trey's advice and put myself in the Novice Group. I know that I don't know everything and I was hoping to learn something this trip. Luckily I had the ZX-6R assigned to me all day so I could ride the track and practice my skills on a bike that I was not only



comfortable on, but also really happy to be able to spend the entire day riding.

The track in Vegas was divided into two halves. Kawasaki and Kymco were on one half of the track, and Buell and Aprilia were on the other half. This meant as you swapped bikes you got to ride a different course as well. It was a system that worked really well and kept the groups small. Each side of the track was interesting in its own way and had its own challenges.

Sportbike Track Time, based out of Ohio, puts on the Femmoto event and their western affiliate Todd Robinson brought his entire instructional staff out to support the women riders.



I asked Todd for a recap of the class he teaches at Femmoto.

"I have been developing several elements of the school since 2001 when I ran my own track days around California, but the structure that you experienced was developed by Monte Lutz of Sportbike Track Time. We have continued to evolve the program into a very refined Level 1 program. I have been pleased to see that several of our students have characterized our Level 1 school as being as valuable to them as schooling for which they spent several hundred dollars. I do think that the caliber of our staff is unmatched in the industry and I think that

our low key and super friendly events draw a very mature caliber of rider, which is what we like to see.



"The first classroom session was focused around learning the track in small groups behind the instructor. The on-track session was in groups of 4-5 riders per instructor, changing the lead student each lap to be sure that each student got time directly behind the instructor, rather than learning someone else's funky lines. We also worked on learning reference points around the track that would be important next time out. We only passed in groups to keep from spooking any riders.

"The second classroom session focused around learning the track for yourself. We talked about rolling on and rolling off throttle to learn the "road" at a fun pace (in essence a single-gear drill), while looking far ahead into turns and trusting your entry speed and lean angle to get you through safely. The second time on the track, instructors do not lead students, rather we just move through the students showing good lines and encouraging riders. From this session on, we only allowed passing on straights and in two big sweepers to avoid cutting off riders on corner entries or making unsafely close passes.

"The third classroom session focused on shifting, braking, and throttle control. We talked about making smooth downshifts on corner approach, using smooth threshold braking but most importantly coming off the brakes smoothly as we begin to turn the bike, and using maintenance throttle through the turn. We then discussed using throttle to stand the bike up as we exit the corner and worked on hand positioning for smoothest throttle control. Note that although we explain it, we did not teach trail braking, as that is a skill we encourage students to develop at the Freddie Spencer School.

"The fourth classroom session is the on-bike body positioning demonstration and hands-on learning. I talked about positioning your body to be comfortable and fluid on the bike, letting your body work with the bike. And instead of fighting the gyroscope, using a combination of counter steering and body movement to aid the bike's stability. We then put each student on the bike and moved each of you around until you had actually felt what each movement should be like. Then we went on the track to practice the skill and have our staff observe your progress.

"The fifth classroom session was a debriefing in which we brought the elements together and revisited areas where students were still struggling.

"From here on we worked one-on-one with students on the track, and spent time in the pits working with people who had specific questions or problems that required more time."



The Rider Course was really good. Every session we were encouraged to work on a new skill. The class was divided into small groups each with our own on-the-track instructor. It was really fun following the instructors around the track. I had worked out what I thought was an aggressive line, but then I followed one of the instructors around the track on his line - it was like being on a totally different track. It was really fun!

The instructors offered really specific advice for me. I was told to make my turns on the bike more deliberate, to help me to ride more aggressively on the track. I also learned to really try to make my movements on the bike deliberate. That seemed to be the theme of the advice given to me by the instructors, and felt like personal advice given to me by a trained eye watching me ride. I guess that is the real truth in slowing down and learning something - giving yourself the time to make every decision you make on the bike strong and deliberate. That is something that I worked on for the rest of the day.



Lunch was included! Sandwiches, wraps and chips. There was plenty of water, Redbull and Gatorade. Jessica Zalusky, of Kawasaki's AMA Team Green was riding with us at Femmoto, and she received an appreciation award from Kawasaki during lunch.



Right after lunch the Kawasaki tent was re-arranged to make room for a wedding. No, really! It was!! The happy couple tied the knot in their gear on their bikes!

I was melting in my riding gear in the Vegas Desert, so I took my leathers off and spent some time talking to some of the women attending Femmoto.



I talked to Elizabeth Haas, from California.

PK: Is this your first Femmoto?

Elizabeth: Yeah, this is my first Femmoto. I always ride with guys. I am a terror on the street! I used to race GP class in the late 70's early 80's. I will definitely be back to Femmoto. One of my friends wanted to come with me, but she was too late to sign up. It's a great opportunity for people like me who are short, to find out from the OEMs if they can make the bike shorter for you. It's good to see women on sport bikes. I love it.

I have been riding for 45 years. My first bike was a Gilera 124cc single cylinder. I saw it in Italy when I was away at school in Europe. When I came back I set it up for the track to race AFM, and I broke a rocker arm. The boy down the street had a TZ250 factory Yamaha and he said, "will you ride for me?" and I said, "oh, yeah!!"

It stayed in our living room for two seasons, that's the bike I started racing on. Then after that I got another two stroke. I just gave up my two stroke collection to buy a Ninja 500, but I am looking at the superbike by Ducati or Mille by Aprilia – the Aprilia is a REALLY nice bike, I am going to ride that next. I am really happy to be here. I think it is really great to see manufacturers interested in approaching women. A lot of times I will go into a bike shop and they will show you a cruiser. No, I don't want that. I want this!

Next I talked to Elizabeth from San Francisco.

PK: What would you say to Women who were thinking about coming to Femmoto?

Elizabeth: I would say to come, and if you are intimidated, start with the Kawasaki Ninja 250. It is an awesome little bike. Try the Ninja 500, the Buell – I am going to try the Buell 12 low. That is a 1200, but it is lowered. As long as you can center yourself and touch the ground and you're confident, doesn't matter if the bike is big or small. I think more people should ride motorcycles. With the cost of fuel I think that more people would benefit from using a bike to get to or from work and to run errands. I think if more people ride, more motorists will be aware of people on bikes. It's all about enjoying the ride, if you are on a Cruiser or a Rocket, just get out there and be safe.



Lisa Schwerin was at Femmoto this year for the first time, so I asked her what she thought of the event.

PK: Why did decide to come to Femmoto?

Lisa: I tried to come up last year, but I didn't get a chance to. I just think that it is an awesome idea to come out and be able to ride with females. I mean, you don't get that option very often. You go to a track day there is maybe 5 females maximum. So, just to get out here and be with a bunch of women is great.

PK: Have you done a lot of track days?

Lisa: Yes, but it is worth the drive from San Francisco to be able to get together with a group of women.

PK: What bike do you have now?

Lisa: I have a R6 right now, but I really like the Kawasaki 636 and the 6RR. I really like the Kawasaki I think I want to buy one! I also rode the ZX-10R and I have a 250 I am riding on later. I have never been on a 250 before. I got here late last night to register so I was kind of stuck with the 250 and the 500 but I get to try something that I would not have picked, so it's a chance to try something completely different.

PK: What advice would you give to someone thinking of coming to Femmoto?

Lisa: It's awesome, it's fun, it's a no pressure atmosphere. It's just a bunch of girls getting together talking about motorcycles. It's nice to see that a lot of other females have that passion as well.

I started talking to Carolyn Boyce (www.bluepoof.com, her website) because she was wearing a Helimot one piece riding suit, which I would love to get one day. I asked her a couple of questions about Femmoto.



PK: Is this your first time at Femmoto?

Carolyn: This is my first track day. I love it. It's been great. I was always really intimidated by the thought of doing a track day and this has just been really fun. It's an absolutely wonderful environment.

PK: What bikes have you tried?

Carolyn: I have been on a Buell Lightninging, Moto Guzzi Nevada, I am about to go on a Aprilia Tuono and then I have a Firebolt. Then the last one is a Kawasaki Z750S. For me being able to try all these different bikes is the selling point of coming here, right? That you can try a wide variety of bikes and you don't feel intimidated. One of the things I love is that the Tuono is kind of tall for me even, and it is one of the shorter Aprilias and they have people on the track holding the bike up for you just to make sure that you don't fall over at the stop/start line. I would never be able to ride one on the street unless I paid a lot of money to have it lowered, but this way I get to try it out on the track.

PK: What bike do you ride?

Carolyn: I have a Suzuki SV650S a VFR 750F and a Yamaha XT225 dual sport.

PK: What would you say to someone who was considering coming to Femmoto for the first time?

Carolyn: It's really welcoming. It is not intimidating. It's just a lot of fun, with a lot of great people. I am coming back next year!



Women from every age and experience level seemed to be drawn to this unique event. The universal appeal for the women attending Femmoto was the chance to ride all the different bikes on a track with the option of instruction (at no extra cost). No where else and at no other event I know of lets you get to try on bikes as easily as trying on shoes! You get to see which bikes fit you. You can find out which bikes suit your riding style. Femmoto is an environment that is there to encourage women. The manufacturers that are participating support women riding. It was really a comfortable environment for you to ask the OEMs about their bikes outside of the male dominated bike shop. No wonder everybody was smiling!



Feeling better after the break I took a Kymco Xciting 250 scooter around the track for a session. What a fun ride! It was cool cornering the scooter on the track.

With no bodywork between your legs you could really move around on it and lean. I got passed on the straights, but the scooter kept up well enough in the corners. The brakes were really good. I would need to move the kickstand; it kept grinding in the corners making pretty sparks.

Ok, enough with that – back on the Kawasaki to finish my day in the sun on the track. I didn't go crazy, as the bike was on stock tires, but I did have fun.

I wanted to talk to the manufacturers who decided to come to Femmoto and ask them why they felt it was important for them to be at this women only event.

This year is the second year that Kawasaki had participated in it. I asked Jan Plessner from Kawasaki Motors Corporation (USA) why it was important for Kawasaki to come to Femmoto.

Jan: Kawasaki knows that the product line has always been appealing to women and first time riders. Femmoto is really important because women thrive on positive role models. This group of women is out riding and they will tell two friends, and they will tell two friends. Basically we want women to know that obstacles are really in your head, that nothing should be keeping you from riding, and every woman here today is an example of that. You can be any kind of person, any kind of background, you can live anywhere and basically enjoy motorcycling. Just because you are a woman doesn't change anything. We all ride for the same reasons. It's ok to pursue it if that's what you want to do. It's important to get that message out.

PK: Do you have friends at Femmoto who are on the track for the first time?

Jan: I know that there are a lot of women that are here at the track for the first time. It is so important to feel comfortable and confident out there. I think women know that this is the type of event that it's good to have it as your first time. A lot of women are starting with the smaller bikes in the morning and are moving on to the bigger bikes in the afternoon. They will probably never go back to the smaller bikes that they have been riding for awhile. It's a safe controlled environment for them to try to stretch a little bit. To see how big of a bike they are comfortable on.

PK: Is there anything you would like to add about why Femmoto is important for women?

Jan: Women only make up ten percent of the new motorcycle purchasers, for Kawasaki it is fifteen

percent. Kawasaki is very dedicated to making sure that we continue to get the word out that now is a beautiful time to become a motorcyclist. There are so many different Kawasaki's that women can ride and the fact that there are all these other manufacturers out here is great. There is just a great variety of bikes a woman can choose from. Five years ago there was half as many models, so we have so many different models now industry wide. It is a great time to be a female motorcyclist!

PK: What has been your most popular bike here today?

Jan: I think the 636s are really popular because a lot of women have ridden up to the 500. They just haven't had the chance to ride the 636 before this event. Everyone coming off of the 636 are saying – hey, I can ride this bike! Women love the power, we all love the power of the throttle. It's a chance to experience a bigger bike and realize that you are a talented enough rider to handle that bike.

PK: What would you say to a fellow female rider that hasn't been to Femmoto?

Jan: You have to come next year! You're a kid in a candy store. You can try any machine you want and we have a great assortment. If you are even thinking of moving up to a bigger bike or even if you are thinking that in a couple of years you would be interested in moving up, don't wait. Now may be the time. Maybe you are ready to move to a bigger bike! Give yourself some credit. Come out and try something a little bit bigger, a little bit different. Give it a try!

PK: Any thought about what the future will hold for women and the Motorcycle Industry?

Jan: I think we are just at the tip of the iceberg right now. Everybody is congratulating each other for what a great job the industry is doing, but we are in the infancy of the growth. 100,000 women purchased motorcycles last year. I think that number is just going to continue to thrive. The potential is huge. There are so many more women out there that want to ride but just haven't taken that final step.

Next I interviewed Robert Pandya, National Marketing Representative for Aprilia USA. He was attending Femmoto as a guest speaker. Robert was at the track helping women with the motorcycles before going out and coming in.



PK: Why is it important for you to be participating in Femmoto?

Robert: We have supported this event for four years, since its inception, Aprilia and Moto Guzzi were the first motorcycles to come to Femmoto and help Sportbike Track Time launch it. It is an important event for us because it is clearly an event that is specifically dedicated to women. When you go to a regular demo event it's really hard for women to feel comfortable around a bunch of other guys. They may not want to try a motorcycle that's a little bit tall or different than they are used to riding, so this is an important event for the female market because it kind of cuts out the clutter. There is less of the testosterone stuff because it is focused on women riding our bikes. It is just a lot more comfortable situation.

PK: What has been your most popular bike here at Femmoto?

Robert: Our most popular bikes by far have been the sport products. The RSV and the Tuono both fill up very quickly. Interestingly, it's women riders from every level. Some who have maybe just gotten off of a 250cc parallel twin, a training type of motorcycle, they get on a Tuono and because of the leverage of the handle bars on the Tuono it feels really comfortable, it is easy to maneuver around the parking lot. There are also women who are regular track day attendants who get off the Tuono and they are just blown away. It started life as a superbike, so that would make sense. At this event the sport products get the most attention. But when we fill up, and women who may have come late to registration and they are forced to ride something a little softer, like a future, or a Caponord, or a Moto Guzzi V11, all of a sudden they discover a new fold to the sport. It is really powerful to see that because you have just opened their eyes to a whole other thing. I am convinced that it is that type of experience that lead you down the road to owning 4,5,6, 7 motorcycles.



PK: Do have friends that have attended Femmoto?

Robert: I do. I have female friends within the industry and friends not in the industry that I have coaxed to attend Femmoto. Sometimes the idea of a track day is a little intimidating, just what that means to the average consumer out there. But the reality of this is more of sort of a demo ride that happens to be on a track. The only real difference between this track and the street is that there is no stop signs, there is no cross traffic, and we are all going in the same direction. So they are all GOOD differences in terms of riding a motorcycle. It's a really safe environment. So we have coaxed some women who didn't think that they were ready for a track event to come to Femmoto and lo and behold a year and a half later they have a track bike with body work and they have discovered a whole new sport, and want to explore it's limits.

PK: What do you think is the biggest advantage to women attending Femmoto?

Robert: I think the biggest advantage is showing that OEMs have confidence in women on their bikes for us. The biggest advantage for the attendees is the opportunity to try a bunch of different types of products in a closed course environment where the variables are effectively removed. It's safe and a lot of fun. There is no better way to do back to back testing on different types of motorcycles to decide what type of bike you like.

PK: Are you going to be back next year?

Robert: Yes, plan to.

I found Gary Cravillion walking back to the Buell truck and I asked him why it was important for Buell to come to this event. This is the first year that Buell has been invited to Femmoto, so it is the first year that they have attended.



PK: Why do you feel it is important for Buell to be at Femmoto?

Gary: I think it is important for us to support our female motorcyclists. We are trying to get more people involved in the sport. Right now female motorcyclists make up 10% of the population of bikers. I think it is especially important because you see a lot fewer females riding sportbikes as compared to cruisers or touring bikes. It is just important for us to be here and be a part of it.



PK: Does your wife ride?

Gary: She rides on the back.

PK: Do you have kids that ride?

Gary: Not currently, no. They are all pretty much set in their ways right now. I don't think there is much chance of getting my daughters involved (in motorcycling).

PK: Is there anything else you would like to add about Buell?

Gary: We make several models that are rider friendly, as far as female riders are concerned. In a lot of cases female riders are of a bit shorter stature. They have an issue with bikes that are so tall, so of course with our

Lightning Low model we are trying to impact that part of the market.

PK: What do you ride?

Gary: I have an M2 Cyclone Buell 2002 and I also have a Road King 2003.

Our group was packed up and we were bused back to the Hotel. I had some time so I cooled off in the Sahara's pool where I met up with some of the women from the track. We lounged by the pool and talked about the track day. Everybody was really happy with the experience they had at Femmoto. The sun went behind the building and we lost our basking rays (it's a tough life), so we headed inside to get cleaned up for that night's dinner and fashion show. (Tickets are \$15 dollars)



I met up with my group in the line for the fashion show/dinner. I filled out my entry form to win a new 50cc MZ Classico Scooter, compliments of MZ North America. The winner must be a registered attendee and be present to win, so I met the requirements. After taking a scooter on the track, I was excited about winning one. I could just picture myself taking it out and dragging a knee around the corners by my house. It was fun to dream – I didn't win. The happy lady pictured on the scooter did win.

The fashion show featured gear from Hein Gericke. The models were women who had attended Femmoto, which was cool. Real riders modeling real riding gear, for women. They did a really good job. Hein Gericke made a jacket named 'Bonnie' for Bonnie, the founder of Femmoto. Bonnie modeled the

jacket named for her in the fashion show. Hein Gericke gave a Bonnie Jacket away to a lucky winner at the end of the fashion show. Other prizes included an Arai helmet.

This year Femmoto is a two-day event, running on both Saturday and Sunday. Sorry guys, there is no track time for you at this 2006 Femmoto, but you can always support your wife/girlfriend at the track if you want to come along and watch.

This event may just be for women, but in reality it is a benefit to couples as well. I know how much stress I put on my husband when I was a new rider. It was a lot of work for him to watch me struggle with my confidence and lack of experience. If your wife or girlfriend rides dirt or on the street think about investing in a Femmoto track day for her. The better she gets on her bike, the more you will be able to enjoy the time you spend riding with her.



Last year the track was open to male riders on Sunday, and a few more of the manufacturer's bikes were available for the press so I got to ride the Aprilia and the Buell. It gave me a feel of what the other Femmoto attendees experienced the day before. Hopping from one very different bike to the next. Nowhere other than here at Femmoto had I ever had this type of experience. It was a blast.

Femmoto is as unique as the woman who created it. Bonnie inspires and encourages manufacturers to reach out to women in an environment she has created for women riders. There is a place for everyone at Femmoto. Partners are encouraged to attend to give their support to the women in their lives.



Manufacturers are given a place to reach women outside of the shops. Instructors are abundant and present to teach at a track event catering to women. Women are there having a great time, knowing that there is no happier place on Earth you could be on October 7th.

There is a place for everyone at Femmoto. I didn't spend anytime with the cruiser women, but they were there in force. So if you are not on a sportbike rider,



don't worry, everyone is welcome and will meet new friends at this event. I also love the fact that there is a place for the Dirty Girls this year if you want to get some instruction on dirt riding. I might do the dirt school too this year, just because I learned so much running through the dirt school the first time I found it a bit overwhelming. As much as I hate cones, they do serve a purpose as a teaching tool. If you are an advanced dirt rider, bring your own bike and sign up for the Kawasaki School of Champions for some intense dirt instruction.

Femmoto is a great step for any woman at any level of experience with a motorcycle license. It is an investment in confidence and skill. If getting the skills you need on a bike is a road it would be a packed six-lane highway (that didn't allow lane splitting). Femmoto is the motorcycle HOV lane that bypasses all that stop and go learning with some real valuable time on a bike. Motorcycle education is as important as any motorcycle gear you will ever put on before



getting on your ride. If you haven't had any formal motorcycle schooling or it's been awhile since you passed your riding test, Femmoto is a great introduction to track school no matter what your current skill level.



I am really looking forward to Femmoto 2006. . I can't wait to see the people I met at Femmoto last year I know there are several women from Bikeland who are planning to go. I am so excited to have all my girlfriends from Bikeland with me this year so I can share this amazing experience with them.



Something I learned about going to Vegas
last year...

*What happens in Vegas – ends up on the
Internet!*

Femmoto 2006 takes place October 7th and 8th in
Las Vegas Nevada. Enrollment is \$100 per day.
For more information and to register visit:

<http://www.femmoto.com>